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U.S. reveals report linking Oswald, FBI

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WASHINGTON — The Warren Commission discussed a report that Lee Harvey Oswald had been an FBI undercover agent for more than a year before the assassination of President Kennedy, according to a recently declassified commission transcript.

Members of the commission, including the late Chief Justice Earl Warren and President Ford, then a congressman, discussed the report at a closed session Jan. 22, 1964.

The transcript remained secret for 11 years until released to Harold Weisberg, an author who had filed suit under the Freedom of Information Act.

Weisberg has written numerous books and articles criticizing the Warren Commission investigation and its conclusion that Oswald, acting alone, shot and killed Kennedy in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

The transcript shows that at the start of the meeting, J. Lee Rankin, general counsel of the commission, said he had been told by Waggoner Carr, Texas attorney general, that "the word had come out . . . that Oswald was acting as an FBI undercover agent and that they had the information of his badge, which was given as number 179, and that he was being paid $200 a month from September of 1962 up through the time of the assassination."

Rankin said he had talked to Henry Wade, Dallas district attorney, who told him the source of the report was a member of the press.

"There is a denial of this in one of these FBI records, as you know," interjected the late Rep. Hale Boggs, D-La., another commission member.

"It is something that would be very difficult to prove out," answered Rankin. "There was events in connections with this that are curious, in that they might make it possible to check some of it out in time. I assume that the FBI records would never show it, and if it is true, and of

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course, we don't know. But we thought you should have the information."

Later, Rankin commented that he and Warren had discussed the report and "we said if that was true and it ever came out and could be established, then you would have people think that there was a conspiracy to accomplish this assassination, that nothing the commission did or anybody could dissipate."

"You are so right," said Boggs.

"Oh, terrible," said the late Allen Dulles, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency and a member of the Warren Commission.

"The implications of this are fantastic, don't you think so?" asked Boggs.

"Terrific," commented an unidentified participant.

Dulles questioned why the FBI would hire Oswald as an undercover agent.

"What was the ostensible mission?" asked Dulles. "I mean, when they hire someone they hire somebody for a purpose . . . Was it to penetrate the Fair Play for Cuba Committee? That is the only thing I can think of where they might have used this man . . . You wouldn't pick up a fellow like this to do an agent's job."

"He (Oswald) was playing ball, writing letters to both the elements of the Communist parties," said Ford. "I mean, he was playing ball with the Trotskyites and with the others. This was a strange circumstance to me."

"But the FBI get people right inside, you know," commented Dulles. "They don't need a person like this on the outside. The only place where he did anything at all was the Fair Play for Cuba Committee."

An unidentified speaker brought up the tension between the commission and the FBI and particularly its director, the late J. Edgar Hoover.

"That is somewhat an issue in this case, and I suppose ou are all aware of it," said the speaker. Weisberg said that in this transcript, Rankin is not always identified by name when he speaks. Warren never is, he said. He speculated that the speaker in this case was Rankin.

"That is why the FBI is very explicit that Oswald is the assassin or was the assassin, and they are very explicit that there was no conspiracy, and they are also saying in the same place that they are continuing their investigation," the speaker said.

"Now in my experience of almost nine years," he continued, "it is hard to get them to say when you think you have got a case tight enough to convict somebody that that is the person that committed the crime. In my experience with the FBI they don't do that . . . Why are they so eager to make both of those conclusions, both in the original report and in their experimental report, which is such a departure.

Now, that is just circumstantial evidence and it doesn't prove anything about this, but it raises questions."

One unidentified speaker said, "They (the FBI) would like to have us fold up and quit."